

Natural Community Types of Stokes County

Rock Outcrop Communities

Granitic Flatrock

A very uncommon Piedmont community type which on flat to gently sloping, very dry rock outcrops with scattered soil pockets which support distinct assemblages of herbs, as well as scattered shrubs and small trees such as oaks, hickories, pines, and red cedar. Flatrocks usually occur at about the same level as the surrounding landscape. Typical flatrock herbs include fameflower (*Talinum teretifolium*), rock spikemoss (*Selaginella rupestris*), rough buttonweed (*Diodia teres*), pineweed (*Hypericum gentianoides*), various grasses, sedge-like plants, and dry-site forbs, as well as mosses and lichens. Flatrocks usually grade to very dry forest communities, such as Dry Oak--Hickory Forest or Piedmont Monadnock Forest, around outcrop areas. Granitic Flatrocks can support rare plant species, though none were found at the single Stokes County example. Species typical of this community such as rock spikemoss are also absent from the Stokes County example. However, it does support smooth sandwort (*Minuartia glabra*), a plant species that is quite uncommon in the Piedmont.

Low Elevation Rocky Summit

This community occupies rugged, horizontal to vertical rock outcrop areas on summits, ridges, and upper slopes in the Blue Ridge and upper Piedmont. It is especially uncommon in the Piedmont, known only from the Pilot Mountain, the South Mountains, Crowders Mountain in Gaston County, Stone Mountain in Wilkes County, and Stokes County. In Stokes County, it occurs only at Hanging Rock Mountain and Sauratown Mountain. These outcrops are generally very dry, but can also contain moist areas depending on the geometry of the rock, depth of soils, and position on the outcrop. Soils are generally thin and restricted to margins of outcrops, crevices, and ledges. The vegetation may vary greatly in different areas, due to differences in physical and chemical conditions. Small trees and shrubs often occur in deeper soil pockets and crevices, while shallower soils and crevices are usually dominated by herbs. Typical trees and shrubs include trees such as Virginia pine, pitch pine, Table Mountain pine, chestnut oak, Carolina hemlock, and downy serviceberry, and shrubs such as mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), great rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), and hillside blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*). Typical herbs include northern oat grass (*Danthonia spicata*), rock-cap fern (*Polypodium virginianum*), witch-grasses (*Dichanthelium* spp.), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), rough buttonweed (*Diodia teres*), marginal woodfern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), greater coreopsis (*Coreopsis major*), rock spikemoss (*Selaginella rupestris*), pineweed (*Hypericum gentianoides*), live-for-ever (*Sedum telephioides*), silverling (*Paronychia agyrocoma*), Michaux' saxifrage (*Saxifraga michauxii*), asters (*Aster* spp.), goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.), mountain spleenwort (*Asplenium montanum*), and fameflower (*Talinum teretifolium*). A variety of mosses and lichens usually occur on bare rock.